

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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LARGEST BALD EAGLE ROOSTING SITE THREATENED BY LOGGING IS ACQUIRED BY CONDEMNATION

In an effort to preserve the core of the largest bald eagle roosting site in the lower 48 States, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has acquired by condemnation 240 acres of privately owned timberland in Klamath County, Oregon, which is used nightly by about 300 eagles, Lynn A. Greenwalt, Director of the Interior Department agency, announced today.

Logging on the area was to begin the morning of June 1 by the Thomas Lumber Company which had purchased the timber from the landowner, Mrs. Lydia Gentry of Klamath Falls. On the afternoon of May 31 a Declaration of Taking with an Order of Immediate Possession was filed by the U.S. Attorney in U.S. District Court in Portland.

"Negotiations to acquire the property had gone on for over two months," Greenwalt said. "However, the Service was unable to reach agreement upon price and had to move to condemnation in order to prevent the cutting of trees which would have destroyed the eagles' roost."

The mountainous area is covered with tall ponderosa pines, prime bald eagle roosting habitat. It is located about 15 miles southwest of Klamath Falls.

The Fish and Wildlife Service appraised value of \$200,000 for the land was deposited with the court at the time of the taking. The court will determine just compensation for the landowner at a later date.

The Declaration of Taking established the area as the Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Various statutes, including the Land and Water Conservation Act and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, provide the authority for such condemnation actions.

"We don't like to acquire anyone's land by condemnation," Greenwalt said, "but in this case, cutting of the trees was to begin in a few hours, and we had to move quickly to protect the eagles."

The bald eagle is a threatened species in Oregon. In California, about 2½ miles from the roosting area, the species is listed as endangered. The Endangered Species Act allows specific populations of plants and animals to be listed as either endangered or threatened.

"Endangered" means that a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened," a less dire status, means that a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.